MDARC CARRIER
Volume LIII Number 10 WWW.MDARC.ORG October 2005

October Meeting

Friday, October 21
7:30 pm

*****

Chris Sutar
Message Traffic Coordination

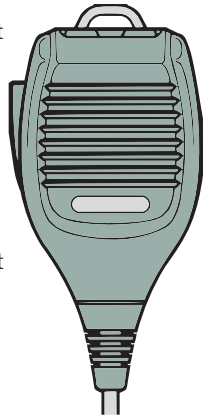
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
1035 Carol Lane
Lafayette, CA

Still Looking For Officers for 2006

By Trevor Hall, WA6JAU

Election of officers is next month and we still have openings. Please contact Trevor Hall at (925)628-0768. We need some fresh new ideas, so please volunteer.

We had a great picnic in September. Bob Green, K6GD, and Teresa Roebuck, KG6IOA, had plenty of great food for all. We had a great time and wish to thank both of them.



We want to thank Otto Gonzales for his fine presentation at the last meeting.

The next speaker is Chris Sutar on Message Traffic Coordination. The next meeting will be at Our Saviors Lutheran Church on October 21, 2005.

PACIFICON is now within two weeks. We have all been looking forward to a great weekend. We have a great list of vendors and speakers lined up. Looking forward to seeing everyone attend. Listen to 147.06 Mhz if you need directions to the San Ramon Marriott. The swap meet on Sunday is also showing a lot of interest from vendors.

Have a great October and a safe Halloween.

ARRL Calls on FCC to Shut Down Va BPL System

NEWINGTON, CT, Oct 13, 2005—In support of Amateur Radio complaints of interference, the ARRL today formally asked the FCC to instruct the City of Manassas, Virginia, to shut down its broadband over power line (BPL) system. Communication Technologies (COMTek) operates the BPL system over the municipally owned electric power grid. The League says the facility has been the target of unresolved interference complaints dating back at least to early 2004, none of which has resulted "in any action or even interest" on the part of the FCC's Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) staff. In the meantime, the ARRL goes on to say, interference to local Amateur Radio stations continues.

"The Manassas system currently causes harmful interference, and it is not compliant with applicable FCC Part 15 regulations, including Section 15.5," the ARRL said in a 16-page filing to the OET and the FCC's Enforcement Bureau. "Whatever actions either Manassas Power or Communication Technologies Inc might have taken to relieve the problem have not been successful, and it persists to the present time. This is precisely the situation in which the system must be shut down, pending successful resolution of the severe interference."

Two years ago, the ARRL put Manassas officials on notice that the League would act on behalf of its members to ensure full compliance with FCC regulations once the city's BPL system, then in the trial stage, started up.

The ARRL and the complaining Manassas radio amateurs—George Tarnovsky, K4GVT, Donald Blasdell, W4HJL, and William South, N3OH—cite interference so severe that "no communications can be conducted in the amateur allocations subject to interference," said the ARRL, which accused the city of "stonewalling in the face of repeated complaints."

"The parties cannot be said to be working this out cooperatively, since the City of Manassas and its BPL operator are currently in full denial," the League said.

Correspondence and reports from Tarnovsky, Blasdell and South outlining repeated contacts with the BPL operator and a lack of effective resolution—and even public denial—of the interference, accompanied the League's filing. All three hams suggested city officials and COMTek were not acting in good faith in addressing the interference, which, Tarnovsky said, goes back to the very first Manassas BPL installations.

Continued on page 3

Inside

Board Meeting Minutes 2
2006 MDARC Nominations 2
ARRL Objects to Limits 3
RACES Training Schedule 4
K7RA Solar Update 4

Mt. Diablo Amateur Radio Club W6CX

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All material must be submitted to the editor by the first day of the month of publication. Material is accepted on a first-in, first-out basis. Articles and other material may be submitted via Internet email to carrier@gardnerclan.net or delivered to the editor at the address listed in the club roster. Material will be accepted in plain ASCII or rich text format (RTF). Material may also be submitted as hardcopy.

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Board Meeting Minutes

October 3, 2005

The meeting was attended by President Trevor Hall, Vice President Joe Cusumano, Treasurer Dick Schulze, Board members Dick Brown and Jay Caldis, Emergency Coordinator Dana Jones, and members Dave Gordon and Michael Burke

The meeting was called to order by President Trevor Hall at 7:17 PM.

There was no meeting in September so no minutes were available.

The Board approved the minutes of the August meeting after they were reviewed and read by Dick Schulze, Treasurer.

The picnic was reported to have been a success thanks to the work of Bob Green and his wife. The food was excellent. It was a agreed by the Board that the next picnic should take place on 9/23/06.

The Treasurer reported a balance on hand of $37,400. He noted that with some over runs and with a pre-payment of raffle door prize expense, the actual is $2,500 over budget year to date.

Keith reported that a new UPS battery for the repeater systems has been ordered at a cost of $99.33.

No progress has been made on outfitting the storage room. It requires installation of shelving and a lock prior to moving the inventory into the location.

There was some discussion on the candidates for the 2006 officers. Not all positions have a nominee at this time. Joe Cusumano, Dick Brown and Trevor Hall will follow up with some potential candidates. Nominations from the floor will take place at the October meeting.

The secretary who was out of town will be asked to send a card to the relatives of Dan Bent, KF6IQL, who passed away. Pete Slagle will move him to the SK list in the Directory data base.

The meeting was adjurned at 7:25 PM.

Respectively submitted by Dick Brown, KT6X, acting secretary.

2006 MDARC Nominations

Note: This is not a ballot. Floor nominations will be accepted at the October General Meeting. Please mail any nominations to PO Box 23222 Pleasant Hill Ca. 94523 before the October General Meeting. No additional nominations will be accepted after ballot is approved at October General Meeting.

President	Marty D. Heyman, KE6WEQ
Vice President	Sheldon Lawrence, KI6ATA
Secretary	Paul Dickey, N6JOX
Treasurer	Dick Schulze, AA6DL
Directors	Don Anthony, N6SIA
	Dave Gordon, N6SWE
	Trevor Raty, KG6MDW
	Joe Cusumano, KF6RGH
Emergency Coordinator	Dana Jones, K6BRR

ARRL Calls on FCC to Shut Down BPL System

Continued from Page 1

"They continue to publicly deny the interference issues at every opportunity without taking corrective action," Tarnovsky said in a letter to OET's James Burtle, referring to Manassas officials. The radio amateurs said efforts by the BPL operator to "notch" band segments have proven ineffective. "Our continued monitoring of the Manassas BPL system has shown they continuously open the notches and/or increase signal levels, subsequently interfering with licensed services again," he asserted. "This can only lead to one conclusion—they are not taking the interference issue seriously."

South noted this week that the BPL interference recorded to date occurred prior to any large-scale BPL deployment by Manassas. He speculated how much worse the interference will be when the system has 9000 subscribers instead of the current 900.

Field tests conducted not only by Manassas radio amateurs but by the US Department of the Navy established that the city's BPL system "was an interference generator at distances of hundreds of feet from the modems on overhead power lines," the ARRL wrote. "It was also, incidentally, determined that the system was susceptible to interference from nearby radio transmitters operating between 4 and 20 MHz."

Blasdell called the FCC's attention to an incident last July when BPL interference made it impossible for him to work a special event station on 40-meter SSB. "I could not read the special event station because of the noise as I drove through the City of Manassas trying to find a spot that was conducive to making a contact," he wrote the FCC Enforcement Bureau. "The noise levels ran from 10 dB+ to 40 dB+."

The FCC adopted new Part 15 rules to govern BPL deployment a year ago this week. The new regulations became effective early this year. Manassas earlier this month formally inaugurated its citywide deployment of the high-speed Internet BPL system, which it touts as "the first large-scale commercial BPL deployment in North America." The city receives a portion of BPL subscriber revenues to offset its costs of installing and maintaining the system.

A copy of the League's filing to the FCC is available on the ARRL Web site. Additional information about BPL and Amateur Radio is on the ARRL Web site. To support the League's efforts in this area, visit the ARRL's secure BPL Web site.

ARRL Objects to Limits on Interference Resolution Site

NEWINGTON, CT, Oct 14, 2005—The new Broadband over Power Line (BPL) Interference Resolution Web site provided by the United Power Line Council (UPLC) and the United Telecom Council (UTC) now is open. But the ARRL has taken strong exception to limitations the site's administrator, UTC, appears to be imposing on the number of allowable licensee searches. A note on the Web site cautions that each licensee "is allowed to search a limited number of times each month" and advises them not to conduct random database searches lest their access to the database be further restricted. ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, said the provision is inappropriate and the database fails to meet the letter or spirit of the Part 15 BPL rules.

"This notice is totally unacceptable to the ARRL and should be equally unacceptable to the Commission," Sumner said today in a letter to FCC Office of Engineering and Technology Acting Chief Bruce A. Franca. Sumner noted that the new Part 15 rules speak of a "publicly available" and "publicly accessible" database. "It is unacceptable for the database operator to attempt to discourage the public from making full use of the database by threatening to ration access," he asserted.

The FCC this week formally announced its designation of UTC as the Access BPL database manager as mandated under Part 15 regulations governing BPL that the Commission adopted one year ago today. The regulations spell out specific interference-mitigation requirements for BPL systems and mandate the new "BPL notification" database. The database is designed to provide information for FCC licensees to contact operators of BPL systems in their areas that may be the source of harmful interference.

Part 15 requires the database to include the name of the Access BPL provider; frequencies of operation; postal ZIP codes served by the specific BPL operation; the manufacturer and type of equipment and its associated FCC ID number; contact information, including both phone number and e-mail address of a person to facilitate the resolution of interference complaints, and the proposed and/or actual date of Access BPL operation. BPL operators have until November 19 to comply.

ARRL Takes Issue with Requiring ZIP Code to Access

Requiring users to enter a ZIP code before gaining access to the database "is clearly contrary" to the requirement that the database be available to the public, Sumner said. "All of this information must be accessible and available to the public without having to enter a ZIP code," he contended in his letter to Franca. "The ZIP code is simply one element in the database, not the basis on which access to the remaining information may be restricted. There can be no restriction to the public's access to any of the information contained in the database."

FCC rules require that BPL system operators supply information for the database no later than 30 days prior to initiation of service. The information must be available to the public no more than three business days later. Sumner argues that making the database searchable only on the basis of ZIP code conflicts with the advance notification requirement.

"The clear intent of the rules is to require at least 25 days (30 days minus three business days minus a weekend) of advance public notice of an Access BPL system being activated," Sumner told Franca. "This advance notice is required so that licensees may document the radio frequency environment prior to activation of the BPL system. For the information to be available only in response to the entry of a ZIP code renders the advance notice requirement meaningless and blocks the achievement of the objectives for advance notice" spelled out in the FCC's October 14, 2004, BPL Report and Order.

Sumner said the inadequacy of the ZIP code requirement is further illustrated if a user happens to enter a ZIP code that apparently does not match the database. This yields the message "No BPL Operations Found in Your Area," and directs the user to contact the UPLC, providing written details concerning the nature of any interference and of the user's licensed operations, "including the location (complete address and coordinates), frequency(ies) of operation, the type of operation (mobile or fixed) and a brief description of the interference." The page also provides the FCC's definition of "harmful interference."

"This, too, is unacceptable," Sumner wrote. "UTC apparently intends to restrict the availability of information to the public

RACES Training Schedule October-December 2005

Date	Location	Subject
October 15	San Ramon – Marriott Hotel	PACIFICON – Various Topics
November 19	Oakley - Driftwood Yacht Club	Digital Modes
December	No Training	No Training

Be sure to verify the time and place of training on the countywide RACES net on the Thursday evening prior to the event. The countywide net airs at 7:20 PM on 147.735 Central County, 145.410 South County and 145.490 West County.

according to its own definition of 'need to know.'" He said no FCC licensee or other radio user is obligated to share such information with a third party, "and most certainly not as a condition of access to information that is required by FCC regulations to be available to the public."

Sumner called on Franca to immediately inform UTC to revise and correct its BPL database system and bring it into full compliance with Part 15 no later than November 19.

Because ARRL is operating a Motorola Powerline LV BPL system at W1AW in cooperation with the manufacturer, the League is a BPL operator under Part 15. The ARRL will be requesting a user name and password for administrative access to the database.

The Office of Management and Budget approved the information-collection requirements the new Part 15 rules contain, and the amendments to §15.615(a) through (e) became effective July 22, 2005. The BPL database, which currently appears to contain no actual data, is open and requires no registration or login. Users experiencing problems in accessing the database should contact the UTC database administrator; 202-872-0030.

K7RA Solar Update

SEATTLE, WA, Oct 14, 2005—The fourth quarter of 2005 began nearly two weeks ago, but last week's bulletin failed to mention the average sunspot numbers for the quarter just ended. This is a normal quarterly exercise, as we hope to spot trends in the solar cycle.

Looking at the past two weeks, the average daily sunspot numbers over the past week were up over 10 points to 21.7. Average daily solar flux rose, but also by a slight degree, only 2-1/2 points to 78.4.

From the first quarter of 2003 through the third quarter of 2005, the average daily sunspot number was 120.3, 107.3, 110.2, 99.2, 72.9, 71.3, 69.3, 61, 46.1, 55.7 and 58.

The average daily solar flux for the same period was 134.3, 124.2, 120.8, 137.4, 111.1, 99.5, 111, 104.8, 96.4, 93.1 and 93.6.

We could almost convince ourselves that the cycle has already bottomed out if we look at quarterly sunspot numbers this year. Last year's quarterly sunspot numbers dropped steadily from 72.9 at the first quarter of 2004, to 71.3, 69.3 and 61. 2005 began with a big drop, to 46.1 in the first quarter, then rose to 55.7 and 58. Could this cycle really have hit bottom during the first quarter of 2005?

The NOAA Space Environment Center Preliminary Report and Forecast for October 4 shows the same smoothed sunspot number history and prediction table on page 10 that it has shown for quite some time now. In this table, the sunspot cycle appears to reach minimum sometime between December 2006 and January 2007.

But could it have reached minimum two years earlier? Maybe we should compare the quarterly numbers from the last sunspot cycle bottom, which according to the graph above the page 10 table was in 1996. The quarterly average sunspot numbers from the fourth quarter of 1995 through the third quarter of 1997 were 21.3, 13.1, 13, 12.4, 14.2, 11.3, 25.4 and 37.2.

We can see that the previous sunspot minimum was when the quarterly average numbers were between 11 and 13. This included some long periods of no sunspots at all, such as the five weeks in September and October 1996 when every day the sunspot number was zero. The average daily sunspot number from September 1 through October 31 1996 was only 2.6.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 3	7:00 pm	MDARC Board Meeting	Carl's Jr. 2280 Oakgrove, Walnut Creek
October 14-16		PACIFICON 2005	San Ramon Marriott
October 21	7:30 pm	MDARC General Meeting	Our Savior's Lutheran Church
October 31		November *Carrier* Deadline	
November 7	7:00 pm	MDARC Board Meeting	Carl's Jr. 2280 Oakgrove, Walnut Creek

The Carrier
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